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THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

BY JOHN WILLIAM PERRIN.

THE first forms of socialism in the nineteenth century were the offspring of two great revolutions that occurred in the eighteenth. That of Robert Owen came from the industrial revolution in England that followed the inventions of Watt, Crompton, Hargreaves and Arkwright revolutionizing the manufacture of textile fabrics. That of St.-Simon was the result of the revolution in the world of thought that occurred mainly in France through the influence of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists. Neither of these was revolutionary in the ordinary sense; both were non-political. The aim of Owen was to complete the industrial revolution; that of St.-Simon was little, if anything, more than to further the work begun by the French Philosophers.

These types of socialism perished in the Revolution of 1848; and that which has succeeded them is both political and revolutionary. Its chief homes are no longer in England and France, but in Germany and Russia. The form that has grown to greatest numerical proportions is the German Social Democracy whose creed is the legitimate offspring of the democratic communism of the young Hegelians. It assumes the rôle of its anarchistic prototype in the first French Revolution and seeks the overthrow of all existing order that it may establish the social democratic state.

There is division among the Social Democrats as to the form of government to be set up in the Social State. Some favor a strong central government; but others exclude entirely the idea of a federation from their ideal, and adhere to the doctrine of Proudhon that "government of man by man, in every form, is oppression." They believe that "each man should be a law to

himself" and all supreme government abolished. While there is division on the question of government, the party is one in the belief that the new social order can come only by the subversion of all existing institutions. Therefore, it attacks the State, derides patriotism, opposes religion, seeks the destruction of the family and endeavors to set up communism in the whole life of the people. August Bebel, its most representative leader, has said: "In politics we are republicans, in economics socialists, in religion atheists." This is the gospel of chaos preached so successfully as to create the largest political party in the empire.

Socialism had little foothold in Germany before 1848. Six years earlier Professor Lorenzo von Stein had expressed the opinion that "Germany need not fear socialism, for unlike France and England she has no proletariat to speak of." But even then powerful influences were at work stimulating its development. There was already a socialistic philosophy derived chiefly from Hegel, but coming in part from Fichte. A reaction, too, had set in against the old political economy derived from the school of Adam Smith in England in the days when Hardenberg and Heinrich von Stein were attempting the economic upbuilding of the country after its conquest by Napoleon; and a few able propagandists, among them Karl Marx, had begun to preach the need of a new social order. When the revolution of 1848 came, the spirit of democracy and revolution that had been inherited from the first French Revolution was revived and intensified. The soil was now ready for the new seed, and when it was planted it grew to marvellous and alarming proportions.

In the first year after the revolution little was accomplished. True, Schulze-Delitzsh founded a number of co-operative societies, but his work, like that of Owen and St.-Simon, was non-political. What Schulze sought was the establishment of "reforms social rather than socialistic." His motto was "Self-Help," and his followers were artisans and small tradesmen who were willing to help themselves when once shown the way. By 1860 the co-operative associations had a membership of two hundred thousand, and in this year the different associations transacted a total of thirty million dollars of business and contributed almost a third as much as capital. The influence of Schulze was now at zenith, but immediately it began to wane. Two years earlier, in a congress of German economists at Gotha, he had allied him-

self with the capitalistic party. This estranged many of his followers, who turned to Lassalle, the opponent of the individualism advocated by Schulze.

The possibility of making socialism a working revolutionary force came only with the radicalism of Ferdinand Lassalle. He was of wealthy Jewish parentage and was born in Breslau. A man of brilliant parts, he was educated at the Universities of Breslau and Berlin. Humboldt called him "*Das Wunderkind*," and when his "*Das System der erworbenen Rechte*" appeared in 1861 Savigny said it was "the ablest legal book since the sixteenth century." It was in 1862, the year following the accession of William I of Prussia, that he began his career of propaganda. On April 12th he gave a lecture before an Artisans' Association in Berlin, in which he, historically and philosophically, traced the development of society and the State. His argument was able and trenchant, and the day it was given has been called the birthday of German socialism.

Lassalle contended that the Revolution of 1848 had freed the fourth estate as the first French Revolution had freed the third. He urged workmen to organize for industrial freedom, and insisted that their only chance to improve their conditions in life was in productive associations that would give them the entire benefit of their labor. He claimed, too, that it was "the duty of the State to furnish these associations with capital, to insure justice to all members and to regulate the markets of the world." He defeated Schulze-Delitzsh before the workmen's unions at Leipsic and Frankfort and then organized the "Universal German Working-man's Association," destined to grow into the Social Democratic party.

Lassalle died August 31st, 1864, from the effects of a wound received in a duel. Bernhard Becker, his successor, was a failure, and for the next three years the "Universal Association" made very little progress. In 1867 Becker was succeeded by Jean Baptista von Schweitzer, a member of an old and wealthy family of Frankfort-on-the-Main. Von Schweitzer was a good administrator and believed fully in the doctrines of Lassalle, which he defended with ability and vigor. It was his aim, as Lassalle had intended, to guide the agitation along national lines; but in this he was thwarted by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel. Liebknecht had professed to be a disciple of Lassalle: Bebel orig-

inally had accepted the doctrines of Schulze-Delitzsh. Both were now under the influence of the international socialism of Karl Marx, and all their energies were used to prevent the workmen's unions which had sprung up since 1860 from attaching themselves to the national socialism of Lassalle. It was not long before they had formed a party favorable to their cause. Then it was easy to make the transition from the radicalism of Lassalle to the international revolutionary socialism of Marx.

The workmen's unions had been federated in 1863. Five years later the federation rejected the scheme of Schulze-Delitzsh as entirely inadequate and declared for international socialism. A year earlier (1867) Liebknecht and Bebel had succeeded in persuading a large majority of the members of the Universal Association to accept the international programme; and in 1869 the "internationalized" union, with the seceding members of the Universal Association, met at Eisenach and formed the "Social Democratic Working-men's Party." The programme set forth as the object of the party the establishment of the Free People's State. It combated with great energy existing social and political conditions, and stated that "the struggle for the emancipation of the working-classes is not a struggle for class privileges and prerogatives, but for equal rights and equal duties, and for the abolition of all class supremacy." A little later a party organ was adopted and the work of winning converts was actively begun.

Little was accomplished during the next two years. The Franco-Prussian War prevented the party's making any decided gains. Indeed, "the wave of patriotic enthusiasm that swept over the land nearly submerged the socialistic agitation": but when peace came the propagation of social democratic doctrines went on under most favorable conditions. War had brought business inflation; this was increased greatly in the first years that followed peace by the expenditure of the enormous French indemnity, which to many seemed an inexhaustible source of wealth. There was the wildest speculation and in the end business depression. Wages fell. Men were thrown out of employment. These were ready now to accept any social vagary that promised them a better future.

There were other reasons, too, why the party grew rapidly between 1871 and 1878. In 1874 the peace footing of the army

was fixed for seven years at 401,659 men. To support this vast armament the resources of the nation were being drained. In 1876 the imperial budget fixed the necessary expenses of the army at 252,099,350 marks; two years later this sum was exceeded by 97,797,473 marks. In 1875 Liebknecht's labors to bring the members of the Universal Association who had remained true to the principles of Lassalle since 1869 into the Social Democratic camp were crowned with success. In that year at Gotha the German Socialists were all united into one body.

The result of the business depression, increased taxation to support what was probably the costliest military system the world had ever seen, and the union of the socialist forces at Gotha is best seen in the election of 1877. In 1871 the party had cast 124,655 votes and returned but two members to the Reichstag. Now they elected twelve deputies and cast a popular vote of nearly a half-million. The situation was alarming, but repressive measures were not thought of until the logical outcome of socialism appeared in 1878 in two attempts to assassinate the aged Emperor. The first was by a youth of low character named Hödel, who boasted of his socialistic opinions. The second was by Dr. Karl Nobling. Hödel inflicted no injury upon the Emperor, but Nobling wounded him severely. Then the cry for repression came from all parts of the Empire. The Government introduced a bill to prohibit "the existence and formation of all organizations seeking to subvert the present State and society." The debate that followed is of historic interest. Bismarck prepared the way for an open avowal in favor of State socialism by frankly stating his economic and social beliefs. He declared that his hostility to Social Democracy had come from hearing "one of its leading members in an open sitting of the Reichstag express his sympathy for the Paris Commune." He alluded to the atheism prevalent among socialists and said that he would not care to live a day longer had he not what Schiller called "the belief in God and a better future." "Rob the poor of that, for which you cannot compensate them," he said, "and you prepare them for the weariness of life which shows itself in acts like those we have experienced." The Social Democrats were no less frank than Bismarck. Bebel declared that it was the wish of his party "to abolish the present form of private property in the instruments of production and means of labor as well as

in land." He twitted Bismarck for his association with socialists, and especially his friendship with Lassalle. He also mentioned Roscher, Rodbertus, Rau, Schäffle, Schmoller and others as political economists with socialistic leanings.

The bill became a law and a temporary success followed its rigid enforcement. In the election of 1881 the Social Democrats, while they still returned twelve deputies to the Reichstag, saw their popular vote sink from 493,288 in 1877 to 311,961. Now they began to work in secret. Socialist editors took advantage of the privileged nature of parliamentary reports and published in full the speeches made by Liebknecht, Bebel and other socialist deputies in the Reichstag. On two different occasions Bismarck attempted by vote to suppress the publicity of proceedings, but each time he was defeated.

In 1879 a secret conference was held at Währing. Here Johann Most, later the notorious anarchist of New York and Chicago, and Wilhelm Hasselmann, a native of Bremen, urged revolution outright. Later in the year it was voted by a congress held at Wynden, in Switzerland, to reject the revolutionary schemes of the anarchistic leaders and to adhere to the policy of "passive resistance" proposed by Liebknecht and Bebel; but the manifesto issued after the close of the congress contradicted this vote most flatly by declaring for the overthrow of the present "insane and criminal" State and social system. Even while the congress was voting its policy of "passive resistance," "The Social Democrat," the official organ of the party, was proclaiming the necessity of the subversion of all existing order to establish the social democratic State.

The assassination of Alexander II of Russia by Nihilists, March 13th, 1881, led Bismarck, on the urgent request of the Emperor, to lay before the European Powers the need of united action for the suppression of the forces of anarchy and destruction. Urged by Germany to take the initiative, Russia invited a conference of the Powers at Brussels. France conditioned her assent upon that of England. England declined the invitation and the conference was not held. All that came of Bismarck's efforts was the conclusion of an extradition and dynamite treaty between Germany and Russia.

About this time the Niederwald plot against the royal family was discovered. This aroused the authorities to greater vigilance

than ever. Numerous arrests were made, and at the trial in Leipzig, in December, 1884, two men were sentenced to death for participation in the plot. The Anti-Socialist law was prolonged till September, 1886, and greater police powers were given to local authorities. But these measures, rigorous as they were, failed to check the growth of the Social Democratic party, which now had considerable funds for the propagation of its principles from "The Social Democrat," whose circulation had greatly increased, though it was published out of Germany.

The result of the election of 1884 was very gratifying to the Social Democrats. They had made a vigorous campaign and demonstrated a strength that no one suspected. They gained 238,029 votes over what they polled in the election of 1881 and won twenty-four seats in the Reichstag. The Government now resolved upon a war of extermination, but, despite its vigorous efforts for suppression, the Social Democratic vote rose at the next general election in 1887 to 763,000. For a time now the situation was unchanged. This was due to the death of the old Emperor and the uncertainty as to the policy of his successors. In May, 1889, the most serious strike ever known in Germany occurred in the coal-mines of Westphalia and the Rhenish province. For a time it threatened to extend throughout the Empire, but in a few weeks it came to an end in a victory for the most part to the miners. The influence of this strike, the almost constant socialist trials and the agitation over the question of renewing the Anti-Socialist law added many recruits to the ranks of the Social Democrats. Bismarck's insistence that the law be prolonged led to differences between him and the young Emperor that resulted, in 1890, in his resignation as Chancellor. The law was not renewed and the exiled socialists swarmed back to Germany. Liebknecht became editor of the "*Volksblatt*" and the propagandists of the party became more active. In October of this year a congress was held at Halle. Here was reached the logical conclusion of the socialism enunciated at Eisenach when the party was formed. At Eisenach it was the democratic State that was still to the front when the union of the socialist forces occurred at Gotha, but at Halle the State had become a reactionary institution which it was right to destroy.

The election in 1890 proved the party to be the largest in the Empire. Its popular vote was nearly a million and a half and

its representation in the Reichstag had risen to thirty-five. Till now the party's vote had come from the cities and towns. This election gave conclusive evidence that considerable advance was being made in the country districts. Since 1890 the party has seen its most rapid growth. During the first half of the year 1893 the all-absorbing political question was the parliamentary struggle over the Army Bill. The Government introduced a bill to increase the peace footing nearly one hundred thousand men to make the army as strong numerically as that of France. The increased expense was estimated at sixty-nine million marks. The Social Democratic, National-Liberal and Radical parties united in opposition to the bill on the ground that present taxes were already unbearable and the people were not able to stand any increase. The Government was defeated and the Reichstag immediately dissolved. The new election was set for June 15th. The Social Democrats put all their energy into the campaign. They worked harder than any of the other parties and made greater gains in the popular vote. They succeeded in electing forty-four deputies, nine more than they had before the dissolution of the Reichstag.

In 1894 Prince Hohenlohe introduced an Anti-Revolutionary Bill; but this was defeated in the Reichstag, and then the Government, in its endeavors to check the growth of socialism, was compelled to employ rigorously such provisions in existing laws as it was believed would hamper the socialists. But this policy created more alarm in the Liberal party than in that which it was intended to repress. The legislative period for which this Reichstag was elected expired June 15th, 1898, and the new election took place June 16th. In the campaign that preceded the election the once powerful Liberal party played little part. It was now divided into many factions which were at war with one another. Chief interest centred in the propagandism of the highly organized Clerical and Social Democratic party. A letter of Graf Posadowsky of the Clerical party, urging that all parties of civil order unite in combating the Social Democracy, increased the energies and work of the leaders of the Social Democrats for victory. The letter was regarded as an expression of the views of the Government and seemed to "countenance agrarianism and higher protection by its references to aiding the producers by the settlement of difficult questions of international competition, and

to promoting the prosperity of the classes whose interests were most endangered—agriculturists and the middle classes.” The Social Democrats set up a candidate in each of the three hundred and ninety-seven districts. They elected fifty-six deputies and cast a total of 2,107,076 votes. Two years later Wilhelm Liebknecht, the leader of the party, died. Since then August Bebel has been in command. In the election of 1903 the party sent eighty-one deputies to the Reichstag and increased its popular vote 903,695 over that cast in 1898. In the last election, that of 1907, while there was a loss of thirty-eight deputies, the popular vote increased nearly a quarter of a million.

THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY SINCE 1867.

	<i>Popular Vote.</i>	<i>Deputies.</i>
1871.....	124,655	2
1874.....	351,952	10
1877.....	493,288	13
1878.....	437,158	9
1881.....	311,961	13
1884.....	549,990	24
1887.....	763,128	11
1890.....	1,427,298	35
1893.....	1,786,738	44
1898.....	2,107,076	56
1903.....	3,010,771	81
1907.....	3,258,968	43

The fact that the party's representation in the Reichstag does not correspond proportionately with its popular vote prevents its being a very important factor in the enactment of legislation, except as it may by combination with other parties block proceedings. But even though it is not able to put its pernicious programme into the laws of the land, it must be regarded as a constant danger to social order. While its leader, Bebel, is a man of lower intellectual rank than Lassalle and Marx, he is nevertheless able, and is skilled in debate and the art of party management. The party is without doubt not only the largest but the most thoroughly organized and efficiently led revolutionary body that the world has ever seen. It is a constant menace, not only to Germany, but to the entire world. Its programme of democratic communism and the radical utterances of its leaders give ample justification to the remark made many years ago by the second Chancellor of the Empire that “it is the greatest danger which threatens the close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth.”

JOHN WILLIAM PERRIN.